The POLYHEDRON

Volume 2, Number 2 Issue #5

TSR RPGA™

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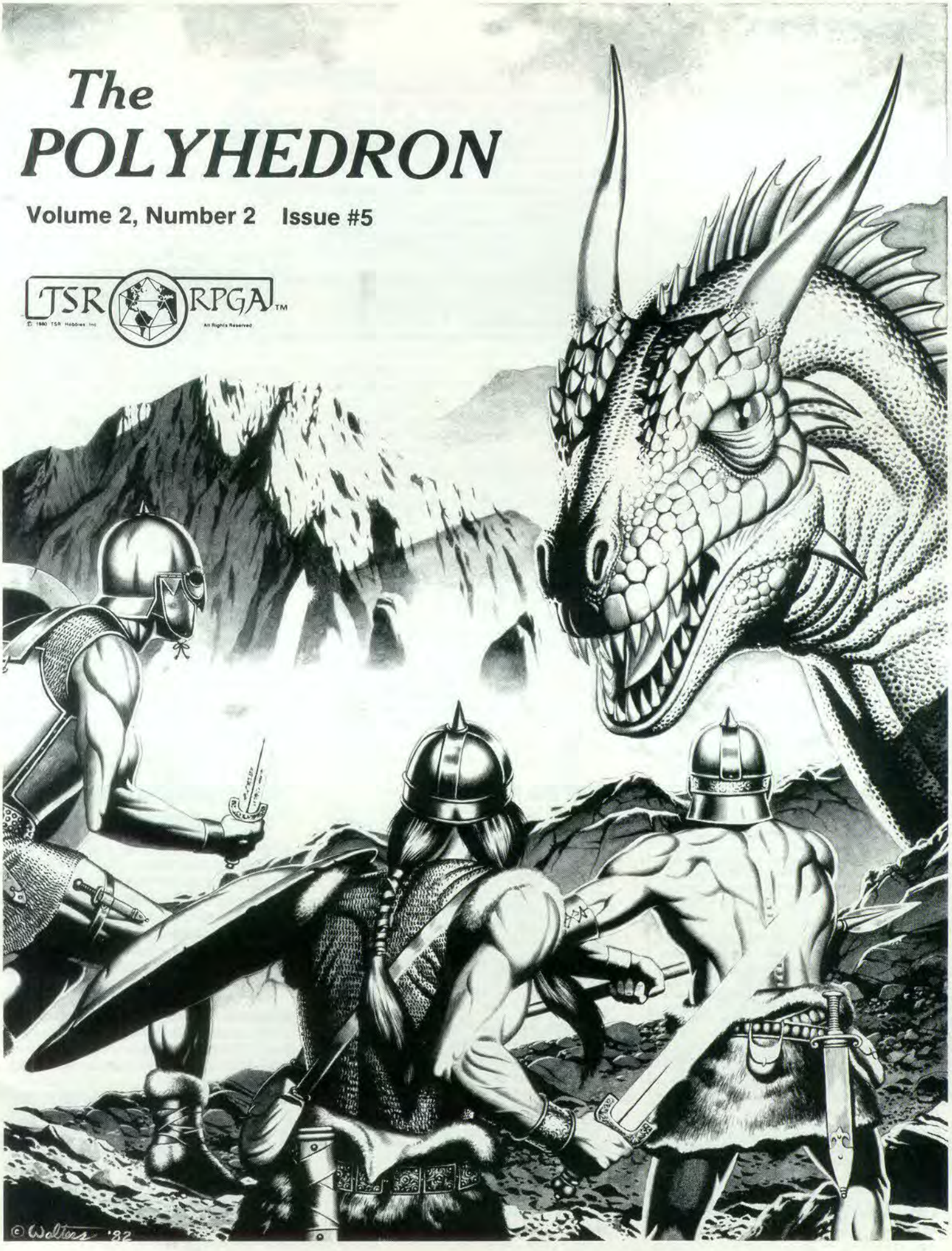

The POLYHEDRON

Volume 2, Number 2
Issue #5

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Photos (pg. 6-7) courtesy of Gary L. Jaquet
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The POLYHEDRON (the official newsletter of TSR's ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION™ Network) is published bi-monthly by TSR Hobbies, Inc. The mailing address is POB 509, Lake Geneva, WI 53147; telephone number (414) 248-3625.

The POLYHEDRON welcomes unsolicited submissions of written material and artwork. However, no responsibility for such submissions can be assumed by the publisher in any event. No submissions will be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope of sufficient size.

The POLYHEDRON is mailed free to all RPGA™ members. Membership rates: 1 year $10; 2 years $18; 5 years $40; Lifetime $200. All prices are subject to change without notice. Changes of address for the delivery of subscriptions must be received at least 30 days prior to the effective date of the change in order to insure uninterrupted delivery.

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Here we go!

The Cons are coming! The Cons are coming! School's ending! Campaigns are starting! Hope to see lots of you at Widener in June, Parkside in August.

Mary Kirchoff has taken over as Editor. I am now Editor-in-Chief. You wanna rave or complain, write to her. Can't tell what you want unless you say something...

Are you reading this newsletter? Are you getting what you want out of it? If not, write something! COMMUNICATE!

Frank Mentzer

NOTES FROM HQ

Members' Meetings coming up soon! See you at the GEN CON® East and GEN CON game conventions, at our usual Saturday night get-togethers with special guests *(do the initials EGG mean anything to you?)*, refreshments, general discussions, questions & answers, and more.

RPGA Tournaments coming up at the same two conventions, plus one at CWA con in Chicago, May 21-22. Write for more info.

Missing and presumed gaming: We've got wrong addresses for 3 members, and we'd like to know where you are; we have *things* for you. Please contact us if you read this; anyone who knows these folks, tell them or tell us:

Ponch Fenwick (Bx 5447, Eglin AFB, FL)

John James McInnes (Bx 44, Navcomunit, FPO NY)

Gilbert Winters (Windsor, Ontario, CAN)

NOTES FROM OVERSEAS

We'd like to tell you all about what's happening in the lives and games of members overseas. However, they haven't told us, so we can't tell *you*.

You might like to know, however, that we have members in Australia, England, France, Germany (West), India, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, The Phillipines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, and Sweden.

We've also received requests for RPGA information from folks in Brazil, Costa Rica, Greece, Guatemala, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, and Zaire.

YOO-HOO! WHERE ARE YOU? Seriously folks, write to us so we can spread more information about more things from more people on a truly international basis. As you can see, the Network is growing steadily; the potential for exchange of ideas between cultural groups is there. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT! We'd love to hear from you!

WHITE RABBITS

The modules are all quite late. We overestimated our production capacity, so they'll all come out a little slower than we expected. Namely, R-3 *(Egg of the Phoenix)* by July 1, R-4 *(Doc's Island)* by August 15, R-5 in October (sometime), R-6 by December, and R-7, R-8, R-9, and R-10 by mid-1983. Blame my big mouth for the delay; I shouldn't have given exact dates the first time around.

My R-5 module "The Great Bugbear Hunt" was used for the GEN CON® South AD&D Open tournament, and is a wilderness tournament adventure. The players are trying to find a stolen spellbook somewhere in a 20 square mile area.

Module R-6, "The Eye of the Bog" by Eric Shook, is a fascinating expedition through different reality probabilities, for high level characters. There's a Bard along, for instance. It was an RPGA tournament, again used at South.

R-7, R-8, R-9, and R-10 are a mammoth seven-part series (two in each of the first 3, one big finale) I'm currently writing for the GEN CON East and GEN CON RPGA Tournaments. They've got dwarves in them; sorry, no more clues.

We're *finally* getting rolling in production; our new editor's getting the hang of things, and we're expecting a designer on staff shortly. Honest to gosh, the newsletters should be right on schedule by midsummer. First plans for "bimonthly" meant Feburary, April, and so forth, but the Winter edition (#3) didn't get out until February, so... anyway, you've got #4 by now, this one is the "April" issue, next (#6) comes "June," hopefully by July; and lo and behold, the "August" issue (#7) should be out — in August! We'll keep it up from there.

We pushed the directories out quickly, but at the end of this year we'll be printing a FULL directory of all members and known clubs. Each member will get a list of *everybody* — which should fix everything up.

GIFT CATALOG CHANGES

TSR BELT BUCKLE

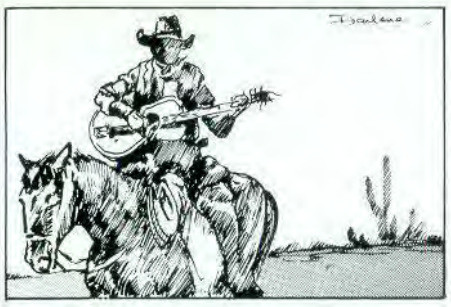
Previously listed price: $5.00 plus postage.

NEW PRICE: $6.00
POSTAGE: $1.50

NEW! *RPGA* BELT BUCKLE

A solid brass version of the TSR Buckle, however, this one features our own RPGA logo. Suitable for belt up to 2" wide. Unlimited quantity.
AVAILABLE: JUNE 15, 1982.

PRICE: $6.00
POSTAGE: $1.50



LETTERS

Letters to the editor may be sent to **The POLYHEDRON**, *POB 509, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.*

"I have now received the first three issues of the RPGA Newsletter and I must say that I have been very pleased with them all. I truly think that the RPGA Network fills a void in our growing hobby. I would like to make some suggestions and ask a few questions.

"First, I am curious as to the type of article you seek from your readership. Are articles concerning good DMing and role playing preferred to articles of fiction and variations?

"As for suggestions, I am of the opinion that a column on game mechanics, particularly combat mechanics, would be very useful. While most questions, such as 'who gets to do what when?' can be resolved by several careful rereadings of the appropriate sections of the manuals, the advice of an expert to beginning referees would probably be very appreciated.

"I do have one criticism: I don't think that the artwork or the comics are as good as they should be. The art shows a sore lack of attention to anatomy and proportion."

—AR, California

We'd like to see any *good articles from members, including fiction, tips, or whatever. Frank is an expert on AD&D games, and has started discussing playing techniques in the* "Notes for the DM" *column; TSR editor Jon Pickens' D&D BASIC column started last issue. Members' suggestions for AD&D play will be gratefully accepted, nevertheless; note the new* "Round Table" *column as a forum for general discussion.*

Art's getting better. TELL US if you still don't like it — and tell us if you do!

"I have been adventuring for almost three years now and feel that a collective entity is needed to coordinate the proliferation of the many FRP games that flood the market. I naturally assume that your primary motivation is toward organizing D&D players and variations, and I sympathize with the Tunnels and Trollers and the Runequesters and the Travellers, but the overwhelming majority of new recruits to FRPing are munchkins with delusions of grandeur who need a guiding hand to find the true joys that role playing provides. Please send more information so that I can participate in an action to uplift the game and foil the capitalistic monsters who intend to destroy it."

— BH, Oregon

Uh... right. Yes, we are primarily concerned with D&D, AD&D, and other TSR role playing games; they're the ones played most. There are many younger players who have not yet become sensitive to the delicate aspects of the games, preferring a simpler approach. To each his own, though; I'm quite sure that most players will change their approach to fit their own changing preferences, in the long run.

"Perhaps this is just idle curiosity on my part, but will you please tell me how the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game got started? You can help me win a bet against my know-it-all brother who says that it started from a past knowledge of Mark Twain's book, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.*"

— PM, Arizona

Gary Gygax co-created it, combining war-game techniques with fantasy. This was the first known attempt at creating rules to cover all imaginable actions. The new game style was called Role Playing, and took many months and thousands of hours of playtesting to develop, which of course drew others into the history of the game's beginnings. By the way, you're not reading the interviews, or you wouldn't have asked!

"I would like to congratulate TSR Hobbies, Inc. on its fine products being produced lately. However, I have one criticism. A number of my friends and I wish that you would come out with a few more D&D modules for higher level players. For example, 12-14 level, or 14-16 level, such as your S&D series."

— DP, California

Ah, yes. Many of you have asked about higher level adventures. The "R" series of RPGA modules will soon touch on this need, and Gary (and others) are working on modules with this request being duly considered.

RPGA INTERVIEW with...

"JAKE" JAQUET

The POLYHEDRON presents Part 2 of our three-part interview with DRAGON™ magazine publisher, Gary Lee "Jake" Jaquet. Our series with Jake will conclude in Issue #6.

HQ: Besides publishing the great DRAGON™ and Best of DRAGON issues that you trot out with occasionally, and the DRAGON calendar, what else do you do around here?

JJ: Besides the magazine, the calendars, and the collections, we've put out the "DRAGONTALES™" anthology of fiction that's been fairly well received, and we're considering doing another volume in the future. We're starting to look at publishing projects, such as fantasy art posters, fantasy art note cards, and greeting cards.

We want to get outside of the regular periodic magazine. If the opportunity presents itself for a heroic fantasy novel, for example (indeed, we may be looking at one very shortly), and if it's feasible to produce, then we will indeed become the publishing house that our name implies. We can put out everything from paperbacks to "coffee table" art books.

HQ: Dragon Publishing, though, is still one of 9 divisions (at last count) of TSR Hobbies, Inc. Are you a "house organ?"

JJ: Well, how do you define "house organ?" If it's defined as a publication that pumps the company line exclusively, or is supported by the company for advertising purposes, the answer is *NO.*

When TSR wants to advertise something in the magazine, they pay us just like any other client. And vice versa: whenever Dragon Publishing needs something that TSR has, we trot down to the Hobby Shop and buy it. There are no free lunches around here. At times, DRAGON magazine lends more space to TSR products than to others. That's because these products have proved themselves, in the marketplace, to be what most gamers are buying. We have to cover what the gamers want, and that's a simple business matter. The day that we start specializing in only one particular subject that gamers have no interest in is the day that we'll start losing readership.

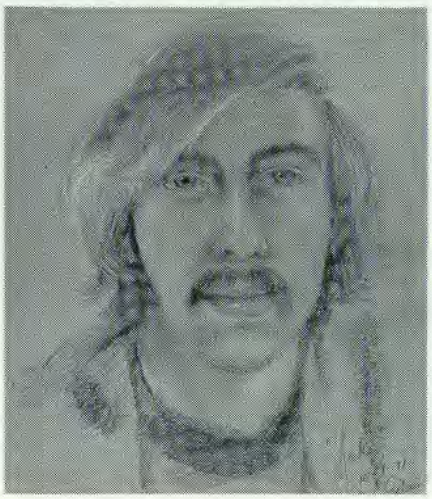
I often use the example of railroad games. I'm a great fan of railroad boardgames, and if someone came out with a magazine devoted to railroad boardgames, I'd be the first lifetime subscriber. Fine, no problem. However, it would be the lifetime of the magazine and not mine, because there's not a readership large enough to support that type of magazine without outside support, like a company pumping in money.

DRAGON magazine is entirely independent, business-wise; it must survive on its own merit or it won't be put out any more. It's as simple as that. Now if the day comes that the TRAVELLER system becoems a more popular role playing game than the D&D system, then we'll do more TRAVELLER than D&D coverage because that, obviously, is what the gamers would want to see more about.

HQ: Conversely and contrariwise, there is a figure review column in your magazine that rarely has figures by Grenadier, the official AD&D™ line. How come?

JJ: We may have over-reacted in trying to establish our credibility; we slated our treatment of Grenadier figures for later on. We had to start somewhere, so why not start with something outside of the D&D area, and get that out of the way first? It's not a question of value; we wanted to make sure that people saw, up front, that there wasn't an AD&D connection, in what we were doing. We wanted them to know that we review figures from EVERYONE. There will be a treatment of Grenadier coming up in the relatively near future.

HQ: In a similar manner, the first mention of the FIEND FOLIO™ Tome contained three luke-warm reviews, with a lot of criticism and not much support. Isn't this overbalancing, also?



JJ: No, that was objective reviewing. It's not the best product it could have been, and there are a number of reasons for it—

HQ: Among them, two years in preparation.

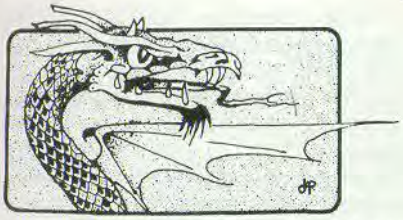
JJ: Indeed. But it's not what people expected, and therefore the reviews were lukewarm, because we call 'em like we see 'em. We could have given it a great review, but it wouldn't have been truthful; it wouldn't have been the opinion of the average person that looks at it. We would rather not run a review at all than run one that shows something other than what it is. It remains to be seen what happens with the FIEND FOLIO Tome. If its readers don't like it, they'll tell us and we'll tell it through the magazine.

HQ: The RPGA™ network has likewise been founded on the basic principles of quality and honesty, somewhat in imitation of Dragon Publishing.

JJ: Well, it has to be; sure, TSR is a big company and has a lot of resources, but the minute that you start becoming self-serving or less that "above board," you lose your credibility and relegate yourself to a very small niche of things, doomed to waste away. I see, what, 11 different publications about games on the market now, some of them of very high quality in terms of the thought and care that's given to them, but they serve a specialized and self-serving purpose. I don't mean the phrase "self-serving" in the negative connotation here; they each promote a specific product or concept.

HQ: "Theme magazines," as it were?

JJ: Indeed. "Sorcerer's Apprentice" is an example. It's put out by Flying Buffalo, the same people who put out TUNNELS & TROLLS, and it's a magazine for T&T players. The last I knew, they were running only about 3000 copies per issue, and they come out quarterly. Now it's not that it's a bad magazine, or poorly done or anything along those lines; it's a very self-serving magazine. It caters to the people who play TUNNELS & TROLLS game; it's specialized itself to that degree. It doesn't have anything to do with D&D or



TRAVELLER games, or anything else outside of their small area. That's not *wrong*; that's just a philosophy of publication, if you will. And they accept that, so the size of Sorcerer's Apprentice will stay linked to the number of TUNNELS & TROLLS players.

DRAGON magazine, on the other hand, is trying to serve the average gamer, not the person that plays one game exclusively. The RPGA network lies somewhere in the middle, in that you are committed to the large audience of players of TSR role playing games. This is such a very large audience that you would be outside of consideration as "merely" aiming for a specialized group.

HQ: But does having a couple more games make us any better? *They* could be devoted to a couple more games, but all Flying Buffalo products. Are you saying that there's a number of players that's a break point?

JJ: Well, you're trying to serve. You define an audience to begin with. We define DRAGON magazine's audience as "people that like to play, read about, and be associated with adventure games." We therefore try to print articles about what most gamers are playing. Obviously we can't put out a magazine that's going to satisfy every gamer completely, so we try to satisfy the largest number of people. If you start off with a small audience and aim only for that audience, you'll have a correspondingly smaller readership. It's not a question of better or worse; it's a question of serving more or less. The RPGA network is making the effort to serve MORE; that is, to be more things to more people. I think that's better, and in the spirit of games and gaming, that's what we try to do, too.

HQ: Do you really think that you and Dragon Publishing are in touch with the gamers, and if so, how?

JJ: We do receive a considerable amount of feedback from people that write to us and call us on the phone. And if we do things that the readership doesn't care for, it'll show up in sales. People won't be buying it. We also make it a point to have a physical presence at the conventions, where Kim or myself can actually sit down and talk with people that might not write a letter or make a phone call.

We sent out surveys in the magazine; of course, surveys are always suspect, in terms of who responds, and the numbers. But we feel that our response is statistically significant, and follow that to a degree too. So yes, I feel that we're in touch with the readers. That's not to say that we're necessarily following their desires, but we're in touch with them. The majority of our readers would like, for example, less advertising in the magazine, although some readers say they would like more, because they enjoy seeing the sources of materials. We know that's a desire of the readers, and perhaps we would sell some more magazines if we did have less advertising, but advertising represents a source of revenue. We don't ignore that request from the reader, but we disallow it, for simple business reasons.

HQ: There's one very visual demonstration of being in touch with the readers that could also generate some income: why don't you run a swap column, ads from readers, or that sort of thing?

JJ: Well, we tried to start a Classified section some time back, and it's not surprising that you don't know about it, because it was short-lived and died due to a lack of response around the end of 1980. We simply said, "Here's a space for some classified ads that will cost this amount," a rather minimal amount, as it was, "and you can have this much space," and turned it loose for about six months. We had a half a dozen people that sent us classifieds, and that was pretty much it. It wasn't a question of economics, of devoting that page of the magazine more efficiently to some other source; it was just the hassle of trying to maintain it for those few ads. The magazine was much smaller at that time, so it's quite possible that it could be a successful proposition, nowadays; I'm not saying that we won't be trying that in the future. It was tried once in the past, and did not work out.

HQ: Could the problem have been that the readers were not aware that they could find other players through the same column?

JJ: Quite possibly, though we tried to make it apparent. The classified ad section generally conjures up images like "I want to sell this" or "I want to buy this," so perhaps if we had emphasized contacts it could have gone over big, and everyone would be in contact with everyone else, and there would be no RPGA network! *(laughs)*

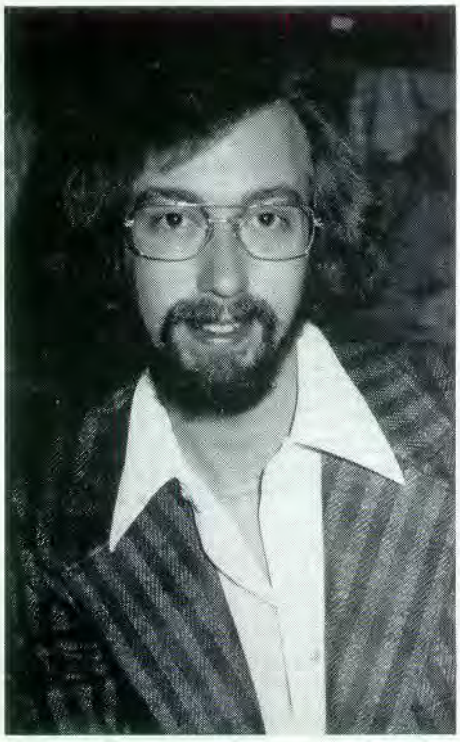
HQ: One RPGA Network function *is* to put players in touch with each other; from our current success, it might be worth your while to look into trying it again.

JJ: Certainly. Well, manufacturers can provide services; in our case, Dragon Publishing is a manufacturer of a product, the magazine. However, the service operation of a big organization should be a full-time endeavor in its own, to provide the most complete line of services, which is why I'm glad to see the RPGA network formed as a separate entity, instead of just being several services provided by the company. This way you can not only provide the contact service, but also produce special products available only to members, and sponsor contests for members only, rather than offering blanket services to anyone who happens to play the games.

HQ: Most of the public doesn't know that you were the one who originally proposed the RPGA creation. Has it turned out, so far, like you envisioned? And if not, how?

JJ: Well, it's turned out essentially as I thought. It's been expanded upon a lot more than my original concept was, and I'm pleased to see that. I originally thought of a national membership in five figures the first time someone heard about it. Now, looking back, that was a rather optimistic conjecture on my part. I assume that the RPGA membership will eventually number 50,000 or more, but if that had happened you wouldn't have been ready for it. So perhaps it's better that it's growing at the pace that it is.

Getting back to RPGA Network beginnings: while the rolls list me as "originator," I didn't really start the concept of having something for people who play D&D games. As with most things connected with the D&D and AD&D games, Gary Gygax originally came up with the germ that sparked this whole organization. At the time we were looking for some way to increase DRAGON™ magazine subscriptions!



Gary said, "Well, if you have a pin for everyone who signs up for a DRAGON subscription, that'd be an incentive." So we investigated what it would cost to buy some pins. It was a very small step to saying, "Well, if we can provide pins, then people will say 'where'd you get the pin?,' and they'll sign up for more subscriptions. It'll become a group of people that, through some action, had gotten these pins, almost like an organization."

So that's where it first started. Next was for all these new subscribers to become a club and have a special tournament. That was expanded on, too: "We'll sanction tournaments across the country, and we'll have scoring to compare everyone against each other," and it blossomed out into the first concept of the RPGA network. All that thinking actually occured in about two hours, but then it sat; it's been about two years since the first thoughts. It sat because of matters of organization and economics, but once it was first proposed, it was inevitable.

HQ: Thank you. You've seen what we've done, and what we've put out: the membership card, pin, certificate, newsletters and so forth. Have you seen anything you don't like, or that you think we should change?

JJ: Haven't seen anything that I dislike, and I'm quite impressed by what I've seen so far. It's quite a credit to the RPGA staff that things have come as far as they have so quickly, and the quality that has been established, from a print production standpoint, something I'm very familiar with. I'm also impressed with the way things are conducted. People call me up and say "I'm an RPGA member, here's my badge number," and say "they're on the ball, and we can get things accomplished because of the organization."

I'm looking forward to RPGA Network expansion, and to the official RPGA tournaments leading up to the GEN CON 1982 finals, with everything coming full cycle. I'm also awaiting the catalog of products for RPGA members; y'know, I kind of get off on that sort of thing. It's just going great; I'm really pleased.

HQ: Thank you, very much; we're working on it. Uh, do you think $10 is too much for a year's RPGA membership? Or, in other terms, do you think it's worth six issues of DRAGON magazine?

JJ: Well, I think it's a bargain, no matter which way you look at it. Consider: to do ANYTHING nowadays, I mean, registering for school, using credit cards... everything costs something. There's no way around it; even if you don't see the costs, you pay for it one way or another somewhere along the line. So if we accept the fact that there's no free lunch, what is reasonable? If you look at it in those terms, ten dollars for a membership *is* a bargain. I don't like paying out money for anything I don't have to, but I look at the value, and the RPGA Network value has certainly been proved.

I'm anxious to see if the RPGA membership eventually acts as a group. Will it be a cohesive force in the hobby of adventure gaming, as an entity in itself, or will it remain a passive organization? I see a potential here for a group of people with common interests AND the ability to contact one another to become a force, a voice, to provide some direction to this hobby industry. If, for example, the RPGA membership gets 50% results from a survey of 50,000 members that says "What are your opinions on this," then that's 25,000 serious-minded people saying "This is what we'd like to see" or "This is what we don't like to see." And that information, passed on to the industry, certainly would have an impact.

It could also be an informed voice to those people outside of the gaming industry that are seeking information. Gaming has evolved a lot over the last few years, and I think the reporting has improved, but still there are many inaccuracies and sensationalizings. I find these personally distasteful both as a journalist, because these people aren't checking their sources or deal with uninformed ones, and as a gamer. I find it very negative, because they're lumping me into a group, and people are going to have opinions about me, as a gamer, based on what they've seen or heard or read.

It's possible that the RPGA Network evolution could continue, perhaps to having representation in some form. What would happen if you were organized in regional ways for members to propose nominations? You could have an RPGA Network representative, or president, elected by the membership.

Groups of people are always forces to be reckoned with. I mean, that's the way our society was organized when democracy was set up. And responsible, informed and cohesively organized groups of people can be extremely powerful forces. That's what's going to be interesting, to me, to see how that evolves and develops.

HQ: Interesting point. One logical scenario would include state representatives. We could tie them in with local conventions, so that every member in the country, with a minimum of traveling, could vote on a national candidate. That would help in creating local conventions in more places.

JJ: We can only benefit the gaming hobby as time goes by. It's just a question of how much benefit, and when; it's pacing.

WHERE I'M COMING FROM

Got a surprise for you: *YOU* can make things cheaper! It works like this: if we want to buy RPGA widgets, then we find a widget maker. He estimates how much it will cost, and we either say "go" or "no," depending on whether we can afford it. But if we want to order 100 of them, they cost us maybe $1.00 each. If we order 1000 of them, the cost drops; maybe to only $ .85 each. And if we buy 5,000 of them, they could drop to $ .50 each! Now, we have to make a little money to keep the organization going, but we're *not* out to make big profits; we're part of TSR, and they make the big money on games and stuff, *not* on this end. SO, to wrap this up, if we've got lots of members and can therefore order lots of something, *WE* get it cheaper, and *YOU'LL* get it cheaper. Get it? ***GO GET MORE MEMBERS AND SAVE YOURSELF MONEY!***

The RPGA Network is going to become the biggest and best thing ever to appear in the world of hobby gaming. There are going to be newsletters in many different languages, tournaments and conventions in many countries; in short, the Network will become HUGE. (We just got our first member and club in Chile, South America.) There's only so much of this, though, that the Staff can do; a lot of it is up to you, the Members. If you like what you've got here, *TELL PEOPLE!* Help *YOUR* organization to find new members in your own neighborhoods.

Finally, I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that you won't have to listen to my rambling as much; the bad news is that you won't be able to find me as often. Translation: I'm being moved over into another TSR division. I'll still be writing lots of things about AD&D games, like Dispel Confusion and Spelling Bee. But Mary Kirchoff is taking over the responsibility for The POLYHEDRON as a whole. She's a capable editor, and I think you and she will get along fine.

Notes For the Dungeon Master

Here's a few notes on encounters and combats.

If you roll for the number of monsters encountered, there will be a wide variance in the results of the battles. For example, according to the AD&D™ Monster Manual, the party could run across 2d10 ogres. If they are all level 1-3 characters and run into 15 ogres, they've got problems; I'd give them ample opportunity to evade or negotiate, skipping the standard surprise roll and setting an encounter distance of about 200 yards. However, I usually don't get into this kind of problem; instead of rolling for the number encountered, I'll grab a number based on the talents and levels of the characters. The players have more fun when they don't have to run away from everything (though escaping from potentially lethal situations can be exhilarating and is always educational); successful combats are a high point of the game.

To help me estimate the party's capabilities, I jot down the total number of levels in the party (counting a multiclass 3/3, for example, as 4.5) and divide by the number of characters to get an average party level. When using the "Dungeon Random Monster Level Determination Matrix" (DMG, pg. 174) the average party level tells me which "Equivalent Level of the Dungeon" line to use, especially when the characters are in a large one-level type of dungeon (such as caves).

Before beginning any encounter, I estimate what effect I'd like to have on the party. Most encounters should just trim off some hit points and use up a spell or two; occasionally someone dies from missing a saving throw. The big finale of the night's game should be a tough one, satisfying everyone's desire for action and puzzles, lethal enough to either kill someone by attrition (just wearing away their hit points) or close to it (even more preferable; they love to be down to 1-3 hp and scared), but not a killer overall. This finale should result in a major addition to party resources: if anyone's lacking a magic weapon, the very type desired is found; a rare potion is discovered, or a major clue to the long-term campaign comes to light. Of course, cash is always appreciated.

I don't mean to imply that there's lots of magic in my world. Most characters of level 4-5 and above have a magic weapon, a potion or two, and occasionally some magic armor or shields; most items are +1. More powerful magic items are found regularly, but the parties almost always divide everything equally by prior agreement, and most are not wealthy enough to balance the value of the item against their fair share. They end up selling the magic item in question to a local shop, and never see it again, sharing the proceeds from the sale equally. This is fine with me, as I can introduce magic items of some power without (usually) worrying about the effects on the campaign; the item is sold shortly after it's found. I do watch thrifty characters, as they can surprise everyone by showing up with a lot of cash, enough to keep interesting items in play.

After running one popular campaign world for 7 years, I've developed a feel for "guesstimating" encounter results before they happen; you can too, just by sticking with it. But to be able to watch what goes on and learn from it, you *have* to prepare your dungeons, encounters, and NPCs before hand; otherwise you'll be too busy with little details to see overall results.

In future columns, I'll talk about running intricate combats, NPC spell casters, long-term campaign planning, handling problem players and problem characters (often different problems entirely), and more details on running game mechanics. If you've got a specific problem or situation you'd like me to explain or offer advice on, let me know; write to me care of RPGA HQ.

Now for a few goodies:

1. POOR THIEF: Encounter occurs, thief drinks potion of *invisibility*. Thief climbs wall. Wall isn't wall. Wall is either killer mimic or stunjelly (from the FIEND FOLIO™ Tome). Thief never returns. Poor thief.

— AR, Los Angeles, CA

2. PIT: Here's a variation on the standard pit trap which you may find amusing. A 25' deep pit tapers at the bottom, forming a "V" shape; the victim's feet either stick in the bottom, or he breaks both ankles. Simple enough.

— ME, Brantford, ONT

3. THE POLE: Unknown to the sleeping party, a mimic has crept in and looks just like a ten-foot pole...

— AR, Los Angeles, CA

4. WEIRDNESS: Try having a little fun with the special abilities of creatures. Imagine a food fight with some djinn; giants who roll huge bowling balls at the party, instead of throwing them (rocks); or the phase spiders who don't want to hurt anybody; they just sneak up and do a little thieving while the party's asleep.

— F

THE ROUND TABLE

POINT: Impressions of an RPGA Tournament

by Philip Meyers

The opinions presented at the ROUND TABLE are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of RPGA HQ or TSR Hobbies, Inc.

This article is the sequel to "The Slave Pits Revisited" (which appeared in DRAGON™ magazine #49), and to some extent is a response to Frank Mentzer's reply in the same issue. The RPGA™ AD&D® Tournament of the GEN CON® XIV game convention must be considered a great advance in the state of the role playing tournament design art, and the credit goes to Frank.

The first virtue of the RPGA tournament was its small size. Teams of six players participated, allowing each session to be something more than a shouting match. (The AD&D Open tournament employed teams of ten.) During the mass meeting before the second round of the RPGA event, the mood of the membership was very positive, indicating that the winners at least were enjoying the tournament.

The second factor in the success of the RPGA tournament was the excellence of the scenarios employed. Both the first and second round scenarios were highly imaginative, and were oriented towards problem solving, as opposed to hack-and-slash. Most interesting of all, however, was the system used to select the winners of the tournament. Generally the players on each team elected from amongst themselves the members to advance to the next round. This system by definition eliminated team dissatisfaction with their judge's evaluation of their performance, a problem that has plagued the AD&D Open tournament.

It was not, however, without certain disadvantages. One aspect of the system was that teams were formed at random, so that each team in each round consisted of strangers to each other. This eliminated one problem, that a team of friends could excel by allowing one or two party members to dictate to the rest of the party. The other system allowed a team of friends to be more efficient than a team of strangers, since a team of strangers tends to make decisions more in the manner of a committee, with each member contributing. The price of eliminating this problem was the complete elimination of advancement by team, however.

At the end of the first round, the players on each randomly selected team were just beginning to become a *team*, as opposed to a group of strangers. These new friendships were, however, nipped in the bud by the scrambling process in the second round. Of course, this process could also have worked the other way, allowing a player to get out of a team he or she didn't get along with or didn't particularly like.

Odds are that a highly successful team in an event of this kind worked well together. The players on such a team are likely to want to get to know each other better, and keep the team intact for the next round. It would seem sensible to let such a group advance as a team. The problem of the Open would not arise, because randomly formed teams from the first round would be the type of team advancing, and hopefully team size would remain at six, helping to avoid the problem of a passive majority following a dominant leader.

Another problem with the RPGA Network system of player election is that it suffers in rounds after the first. A second round team tends to be fairly concentrated in dominant players, used to leading the group and having their way. The ancient problem of too many chiefs and not enough indians thus arises. At the end of the first round, it is usually fairly clear which players should advance, because there is a fairly wide range of ability on the typical random team. The range of ability in the second round is, however, a great deal narrower. All of the second round players will know fairly well what they're doing, and having advanced once will be infused with a keen desire to advance again. This leads to a situation wherein dominant personalities on a team clash for control; the victor may be the one with the loudest voice, not the best player, or even the best leader. The motivation to cooperate as a team and the motivation to dominate as an individual work at cross purposes in a second round team, possibly leading to an undercurrent of bad feelings among the players.

One solution to this problem might be to reinstate advancement by team on the second and subsequent rounds, leaving the selection of alternates to the present player election system. It is known, however, that advancement by team has its share of problems as a system for role playing tournament advancement. The most obvious problem is that it places a premium on the skill of the DMs running the various sessions. Variations in rule interpretations among the DMs may make the difference between victory and defeat among teams. This problem is most severe in an opening round where a large number of DMs, some whose qualifications are somewhat questionable, must be employed.

In the second and subsequent rounds, the severity of the problem diminishes because the tournament head can put his best persons in as DMs. The severity of the problem also varies with the nature of the scenario. The more hack-and-slash a scenario is, the more likely it is that a difference in rule interpretations will make a difference in team advancement, such as when one DM lets a party get away with throwing a fireball in a confined space and another doesn't. On the other hand, a problem solving scenario is less subject to such abuses, because rule interpretations are less critical to the party's success. Of course, some element of combat must remain in a problem solving scenario, but the chances of that element making a difference in team performance are relatively low.

A second round team, particularly one that excels over other second round teams, is likely to develop a considerable amount of comradeship during the adventure if the players are not forced into trying to upstage one another to gain individual glory. So long as team sizes remain small, there is much to be said for a hybrid sort of advancement system, where the first round winners are selected by player election and the second and subsequent round winners are selected by team advancement.

It should be remembered that the RPGA network is not, by nature, an organization of cut-throat competitors out to prove themselves the best. This author did not become an RPGA member to prove himself the world's greatest gamer (which he isn't), but rather to get to know other people with a strong interest in an unusual hobby that requres a great deal of intellectual ability to participate in. To some extent it seems a shame that the only context in which RPGA members meet each other is a competitive one. If a second round team advancement system were being used, then at least 50% of the members in the tournament would get a chance to play together in a purely cooperative atmosphere. If the BATTLE ROYAL system mentioned by Frank in TD-49 comes into use, it might be possible to maintain a fairly small, intimate second round even when the first round is very large.

The whole subject of role playing tournaments brings up a fundamental

question: Why do we have them at all? Unlike chess or football, role playing games are basically cooperative, not competitive. The players in a normal AD&D campaign are not playing against each other, nor against their DM. It would seem that role playing tournaments are popular mainly because there seems to be no other way for a large number of people to play together. For the gaming public at large there appears to be no alternative to role playing tournaments. The RPGA network, however, is in a better position than the public at large, because the level of ability and dedication of its members are high in comparison to the gaming public. Why could there not be then a "MegaCampaign" similar to a normal campaign but on a larger scale? The following is a conception of how such a campaign would work.

The MegaCampaign, or RPGA campaign, would most likely be held twice a year, at the GEN CON and GEN CON EAST game conventions, where RPGA tournaments are now being offered. The membership would divide into teams as in a tournament, but the teams would not compete against each other. Each team would instead play a different scenario in pursuit of a common goal. For instance, ten parties of adventurers are sent to explore the ten entrances to the mountain fortress of a powerful evil wizard, with the condition that if seven teams make it through to the heart of the mountain the overall mission is considered a success, the evil wizard having fled or been destroyed by the combined efforts of several groups of adventurers.

The obvious problem with such a system would be coming up with a different scenario for each team. The RPGA Staff cannot possibly do this by themselves; they will need creative help from the membership. For a MegaCampaign to succeed, a certain small number of RPGA members would have to become official dungeon masters in the full sense, not only running the scenario but writing it as well. The RPGA staff would have to select the official DMs from amongst sample mini-modules received from members interested in running the MegaCampaign. It does not take long to write up a short scenario sufficient to keep a party busy for hours; it is hoped that enough members would be willing to do this so that the MegaCampaign could be a success.

In any event, the size of the MegaCampaign would be variable, as large or as small as the number of available DMs and scenarios. The RPGA Staff would be responsible for coordinating the efforts of the various designers. For instance, in the evil wizard's fortress example above, each potential DM should be given guidelines as to size, location, and how difficult mini-modules are to design. They would also be responsible for coming up with an overall storyline. Official RPGA characters could be begun and actually advance from year to year, say at a pace of one level per successful mission.

The MegaCampaign could never be an open campaign in the sense that everyone could participate, unless, of course, the number of official DMs grew large enough to make this possible. It would not replace the RPGA tournament, but merely provide an alternative to it, allowing members to meet one another in a less competitive situation. With just ten members willing and able to become official DMs, a MegaCampaign of 60 players could come into existence. Are there nine of you out there willing to wield your typewriters for a worthy cause? Remember that the RPGA network is what its members make out of it!

COUNTERPOINT: As Fast As We Can... *by Frank Mentzer*

Thank you, Phil, for the praise. In creating the RPGA system for role playing tournaments, I tried to provide a method in which the best players — not the best teams — make it into the finals, and the best players of all reap the highest rewards.

Before you criticize either tournament system, stop and think: how would YOU handle 1000 AD&D tournament players?

We're still fiddling with our system, and may try a hybrid with team play later on. But you seem to place a premium on leadership, and that is *not* a major consideration; quality of role playing, knowledge of rules, and *cooperation* are the prime criteria. Better players do tend to be dominant, but the best of them know when *not* to dominate, for the sake of the mission. The voting reflects the honest appraisals of the players, and is controlled by awarding more votes to DMs who have proved the quality of their opinions; they're not swayed by dominance.

The RPGA system complements the AD&D Open's system of team play. We are not competitors; the RPGA Network, as a private club, can offer smaller games with a different approach, because we have less players. The Open MUST use team scoring and advancement; there's no other way to handle the incredible numbers of players characteristic of such events. The popularity of the D&D and AD&D games will draw thousands of players to the conventions, and an official Open tournament is the way in which they can all compete. When I ran the Open at the 1982 GEN CON South convention, I ran it as a team event; but I ran the RPGA tournament at the same con in our usual manner. Together, the two tournaments serve the needs of all the AD&D players.

In scenario creation, I focus on entertainment, trying to keep luck a small a part as possible. Making or failing a saving throw should not decide the fate of the player; RPGA scenarios have low mortality rates. *ANY* system of team advancement compares the teams against each other, the scoring therefore dependent on the DMs, the style, speed, and quality of whom varies widely. This is as unequal as death by saving throw! Sorry; we MUST have fairness.

The BATTLE ROYAL system is an interesting game, designed by Bob Blake and myself for possible tournament use. It pits two identical teams against each other in a confined melee, and those with the best knowledge of the AD&D system AND combat tactics do well in it. But it is sadly lacking in a vital aspect: role playing. Thus, it will remain a nice game — it uses a minimum of space, one DM for 14 players, and easy scoring — but will *not* forseeably become a standard scenario for role playing tournaments.

Your MegaCampaign idea is nice, but you overestimate the capability of our staff at this point. The creation of more new modules, when we are hard pressed to come up with those for the regular tournaments, is still a dream for the future. Even the coordination of outside creation would require more attention and rewriting than we can spare, as we insist on a high standard of quality, one difficult to match by amateur designers. No offense meant, but that's the way it is.

I suggest that the new friendships we allegedly nip could be extended by simply exchanging addresses. Unscheduled games are a common feature of conventions; why not get together to play some more after the official tournament session? And the tournament is NOT the only time members get together; my perennial AD&D Q&A sessions are well attended, and the RPGA Members Meetings feature friendly conversations amidst all the participants.

I'm currently working on a few things similar to the intent of your MegaCampaign idea: a "standard RPGA character" system and other things to unify widespread players. But these will take *TIME*, which we're short on here at HQ. Remember that tournaments are attended by 10% or less of the membership; we must concentrate on those features of the organization which will serve the interests of the most members.

Thanks again for your comments and ideas. Anyone else have some more on this subject?

Q: The *enlarge* spell states that, when reversed, it will "make creatures or objects smaller in the same ratios...." So if my 5th level M-U casts this on a troll, and it fails its saving throw, it shrinks 100% —and disappears! Where have I gone wrong?
A: In the math. The key word is *ratio*. When that level M-U casts the *enlarge* version, the creature ends up twice the normal size; a 2:1 ratio, comparing the result to the original. The *shrink* version gives the opposite result, a 1:2 ratio — or in other words, down to *half* the original size. The spell states that there's a maximum of 200% enlargement. In other words, a 6' creature can add 12' maxium, to end up 18' tall, or (18 divided by 6) a 3:1 ratio; therefore, the smallest possible *shrink* effect is 1:3, or one-third the original size.

It's only a first level spell.

Q: Does dragon breath do damage equal to the dragon's *current* hit points, or its *original* (undamaged) hit points?
A: In the AD&D system, dragon breath damage is always equal to the dragon's original hit points — even if it's currently down to 1 hp. In the D&D BASIC Set, it's the other way around; the current hit points determine the damage done.

Q: How much does a saddlebag hold? Or a backpack?
A: According to the AD&D Player Character Record Sheets booklet, a Small Pouch or Purse holds 25gp, volume 1/4 cubic foot; large pouch 50gp, 1/2 cubic foot; small sack *or tied shirt* 100gp or 1 cubic foot; backpack 300gp or 3 cubic feet; and large sack, 400gp or 4 cubic feet.

If you've never tried this product, check it out; it's very helpful. So are the ROGUES GALLERY (with lots of pre-rolled characters, *plus* descriptions of famous ones like Tenser, Mordenkainen, and so forth) and the DM's ADVENTURE LOG (for keeping track of adventures, parties, etc.)

Q: How do you handle it when a character meets a duplicate of himself? If the DM is running a character when the fight is over, the other players know what happened, even if their characters supposedly don't.
A: We recommend that when such a fight starts, the DM should stop play for a moment and talk privately with the players involved. They should be told that whatever the outcome, they will continue to play the character. The DM passes a note at the end of the battle, *regardless of the outcome*, telling the player what he or she really is. This keeps everyone else guessing, and can work quite nicely if the player will go along with the game.

BAG OF TRICKS

(This column will be used to share ideas from members on good fantasy role playing techniques. Send in your comments!)

ASSASSINS: Some players get *very* upset if a known or suspected assassin wants to adventure with a party. But most people don't realize that an assassin is a minimal risk; he wants to live, like the others. With a proper talking to ahead of time, an assassin can be a valuable party member, using his special talents for the aid of the party, not against them. (But watch out for chaotics. Speaking of which:)

CHAOS: You'll keep your DM happiest if you remember that the game should be run Lawfully, even if all the characters are Chaotic. This takes control and maturity, but the game will go faster and you'll go through more encounters (and get more treasure) in less time. Go ahead and role play the Chaos, but when you're traveling, mapping, having a battle, or whatever, shift to "Lawful mode."

DARKNESS: A *continual darkness* gem (see "Light," below) can be thrown at a dangerous oncoming opponent to cover a reteat, and causes confusion among many low intelligence types.

DEATH: If you're getting low on hit points, fall over and play dead the next time you get hit. If there are still party members in the melee, the monster will probably go after them instead of you. Remember not to get up until the battle's over, though!

You MUST tell the DM the actual situation, but intelligent monsters are often fooled by this simple trick; why attack someone who's down with a bunch of live opponents around? NOTE that if you're still in pretty good shape, most creatures will NOT be fooled.

DOORS: So you open a door and see a room or corridor ahead. If the coast is clear, take the door off the hinges! The more doors you remove, the faster you can travel later. But DON'T do this if the dungeon belongs to some special monster; it's a noisy operation, and it will irritate most dungeon owners. Don't be surprised to find the doors fixed later; an organized complex probably has a maintenance department.

If you take one door with you, it can come in handy for ramming other doors, as a bridge, or whatever you can think up. But it's *heavy*.

LIGHT: A *continual light* spell can be thrown on a gem and kept in a tightly closed bag until needed. Note that it gives light in all directions with a 60' radius; this ruins chances for surprising monsters.

The nice thing about a gem is its versatility; it can be thrown into a dark room before entering can be easily hidden, and can be carried around indefinitely until needed.

MAPPING: It can help a lot to map the corridors of an area without opening any doors (or as few as possible). You can find the relative size of the area and have known area for retreating through. Secret areas can often be found by examining the map afterward and noting blank spots

MULES: Ever run into a huge hoard of silver pieces? If you've taken a mule into the dungeon, most of it can be easily carried out. These finicky beasts can be calmed and reasoned with using a *speak with animals* spell, or better yet a druid's *charm mammal spell.*

SECRET COMPARTMENTS: If your party has someone with stoneworking skills (any dwarf or gnome, or a secondary skill for others), you might be able to get a stone loose from a wall and make your own secret stash in the dungeon. You can keep extra equipment there to be picked up on a later trip, and if you take care it will be nearly undetectable by most monsters. If you can *wizard lock* it shut, so much the better.

SPELL BOOKS: Taking a spell book on an adventure can be very risky. Ask your DM if you can have a "traveling spell book," containing just a few spells for replenishing used ones. It can cost a lot, but can be VERY useful. Try for a small assortment of one attack, two defensive, and one or two miscellaneous spells.

SPELLING BEE

There are a few Official AD&D™ spells that are NOT covered in the hard-cover books. Two appeared in Gary Gygax's module G3 *(Hall of the Fire Giant King)*, and are now included in the revision of the G series, G 1-2-3 *(Against the Giants)*. These spells are the rare 9th level magic-user spells, ***crystalbrittle*** and ***energy drain.***

(The spell descriptions hereafter are from Module G 1-2-3 "Against the Giants," ©1978, 1981 TSR Hobbies, Inc.)

Crystalbrittle *(Alteration)*

Level: *9*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Area of Effect: *2 cubic feet per level*
Components: *V, S*
Casting Time: *9 segments*
Saving Throw: *Special*

Explanation/Description: The dweomer of this spell causes metal, whether as soft as gold or as hard as adamantite, to turn to a crystalline substance as brittle and fragile as crystal. Thus a sword, shield of metal, metal armor, or even an iron golem can be changed to a delicate, glass-like material easily shattered by any forceful blow. Furthermore, this change is unalterable short of a ***wish*** spell; i.e., *dispel magic* will not reverse the spell effect. The caster must physically touch the target item — equal to a hit in combat if the item is worn, wielded, or a monster.

Any single metal item can be affected by the spell. Thus, a suit of armor can be changed to crystal, but the shield would not be affected, or vice versa. All items gain a saving throw equal to their magical bonus value or protection. *A sword +1/+3* would get a 10% chance to save (the average of the two plusses), *magic armor +5* a 25% chance to be unaffected, and an iron golem a 15% chance to save (for it is hit only by magic weapons of +3 or better quality). *Artifacts* and *relics* of metal have a 95% chance to be unaffected by the spell. Affected items not immediately protected will be shattered and permanently destroyed if struck by a normal blow from a metal tool or any weighty weapon, including a staff.

Comments: Well, first of all I don't like to cast a spell of the highest rank possible and have it blown because of that percentage roll. There are numerous ways to help it, though; a *luckstone* for example, can alter the roll in your favor. But this is a specialty spell; you won't be running around with it ready "just in case." A *shape change* or *prismatic sphere* would be much more generally useful. Once your mage is over 21st level, and has multiple 9th level spells to toss around, this is one to consider as an extra.

When a character adds this spell to his or her repertoire, the DM should design a climactic finale to an adventure in which a *crystalbrittle* spell is vital: a powerful guardian untouchable as long as a magic metal device it has is used; metal shielding around the final goal; there are many possibilities. Remember to plan uses for plenty of the party's other capabilities, along with this central idea for the end.

Energy Drain *(Evocation)*

Level: *9*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Area of Effect: *1 creature*
Components: *V, S, M*
Casting Time: *3 segments*
Saving Throw: *None*

Explanation/Description: By casting this spell, the magic-user opens a channel between the plane he or she is on and the Negative Material Plane; the caster becomes the conductor between the two planes. As soon as he or she touches any living creature (equal to a hit if melee is involved), the victim loses two energy levels (cf spectre in *Monster Manual*). A monster loses two hit dice permanently, both for hit points and attack ability. A character permanently loses levels, hit dice and points, and abilities (unless regained through adventuring, if applicable). The material component of the spell is *essence of spectre* or *vampire dust*. Preparation requires three segments, the material component is cast forth, and upon touching the victim the magic-user speaks the triggering word ("entropy," "nihil est," or whatever), and the dweomer takes effect instantly. There is always a 1 in 20 chance that the caster will also be affected by the *energy drain* and lose 1 energy level also when the victim is drained of two. Humans or humanoids brought to zero energy levels by this spell become *zombies.*

Comments: This is a nice example of Gary's writing style, and includes a rare detailed description of the play-by-play action in the casting.

It's clear enough: a mage can knock two levels off of an opponent if a hit can be scored. This can be tough for a mage, but the spell would be a bit *too* powerful if it had a range. Note that *restoration* doesn't work on this effect; more experience points are necessary to regain the levels.

The last sentence deals with a procedure that was revised a bit: a human or humanoid brought to zero energy levels is a Level Zero character, i.e. typical townie wimp. One more level drain kills, with the victim rising as an undead (zombie, in this case) a day or so later. The "first published" rule applies here; the G modules came out after the PH, but before the DMG, where that revision occurred.

There were 26 new clerical spells published in DRAGON™ magazine #58 in Len Lakofka's column *Leomund's Tiny Hut*. Most are good, some are okay, one or two are not; TSR's Design department should be reviewing them soon, rephrasing and cross checking the details so they fit nicely into the AD&D system.

I'll put off detailed comments until they're in better shape, and also because we're nearly out of space. Briefly, though: several *ceremonies* are included, for campaign use (logical ones like marriage, burial, etc.); some holes in the system have been filled, by spells like the 3rd level *remove paralysis* and *water walking*. *Magic stone*, a first level, gives clerics another magical missile weapon, but the spell description still has many problems. DON'T use it as given.

When we get the Final Official versions, we'll print them, complete with comments.

Next column, the eternally disputed ***phantasmal force***, with ramifications.

2: Putting Brush to Figure

FIGURE PAINTING

by Michael Brunton

Michael Brunton is arguably Britain's leading 25mm fantasy figure painter. In this series of articles, reprinted with permission from the D&D™ Players Association News (our counterpart in the UK), he gives advice and vital tips on how to paint successfully.

Take a figure from a boxful, and paint it. Sounds simple, doesn't it? In some ways it is, but the easy things are never quite as easy as they seem.

In the first article, I covered the basics of the craft (art?) — brushes, paints, tools, etc. — dull stuff perhaps, but necessary. In this article I intend to cover basic painting techniques, including a step-by-step guide to painting faces. Before I get properly started, I should tell you that a colour card, either for acrylics or oil paints, will help you a lot when reading this article, so that you can see what colours I am talking about at any particular point.

PREPARING THE FIGURE

Before any figure can be painted, there are a couple of jobs which must be done if the finished article is going to look good. Basically, the figure must be cleaned up, made good, and undercoated. First job: file the bottom of the figure's base flat, so that it stands up on its own. Trim off all the excess flash, moulding runners, and moulding lines with a craft knife (I use a scalpel with a #11 blade) and a file. This doesn't take long unless the figure is badly cast or heavily flashed, but it does improve these figures immeasurably.

Once this is done, check the figure over for holes in the surface, which occasionally occur when too much mould release agent has been used. If you do find any pitting, make it good with whatever smooth surface filler you are using (Milliput or a similar material). In the unlikely event that a small piece of casting is missing, it is possible to build a replacement with Milliput. If you have used any filler, then let it dry thoroughly before you proceed any further.

At this point you should mount the figure on some kind of painting handle with a bit of Blu-Tak. If the figure has become greasy in the cleaning up process, you should wash it in a weak solution of washing-up liquid first, as the undercoat will adhere better to a clean surface. You should also decide whether to assemble a multi-part figure now or leave it until nearer completion — i.e., paint the bits separately.

Whatever undercoat you use on the figure, and however you apply it (brush or spray), always put it on as several thin washes, allowing each to dry before putting on the next. Manufacturers go to a great deal of trouble in putting surface details on figures, so don't hide it under a great thick gunge.

PAINTING

There are some basic rules which make painting figures a lot easier when they are followed with intelligence. Patience is a virtue which should be cultivated, as rushing the work at any stage, especially painting, always gives inferior results. Always start painting the areas of a figure which are the most recessed on the casting. If possible, try to work on the lighter coloured areas first — while dark colours will cover light ones if you change your mind, the reverse is very rarely true. Finally, work on metallic areas last of all, and maintain a separate pot of thinners for metallic paints, as they have a tendency to contaminate ordinary colours with metal flakes.

A SMALL NOTE

There are two techniques which need explaining before I go into detail on painting methods:

Dry Brushing: Dry brushing is one of those useful ideas that has many functions. It involves two processes. Firstly paint the area a darker shade than is required, and let this dry completely. Next make up a mix which is a lighter shade than required. Now get some of this mix on your brush, soak off as much of the thinner as possible, and gently splay out the brush hairs. With the paint almost dry on the brush, draw it lightly across the intended area, so that only raised details pick up a "dusting" of colour. Repeat this process several times if necessary to achieve depth of colour — don't try to dry brush all in one go.

Colour Washes: Colour washes are extremely simple. Basically all that is required to do this is a colour and thinners. Thin the paint until it becomes transparent and then apply it to the figure with a large brush. The paint will run into the detail and make it stand out to a large degree. Multiple washes can provide some very interesting effects.

PAINTING A FACE

The best place to start any figure is with the face. In the final analysis, it is the standard of painting on the face that makes or breaks the figure. No amount of fine detail work on the rest of the figure can rescue it if the face is poorly rendered. OK, so where to start on the face? It might seem a good idea to use the commercial "flesh" mixes that are produced directly from the tin — but how many people do you know with anaemic salmon pink complexions?

It is far more satisfying to mix your own flesh tints for figure work, and to produce different colours for different figures. After all, no two people are exactly the same colour. There are literally dozens of ways to arrive at a colour which can be termed "flesh." There is even nothing inherently wrong about using commercial "flesh," but it should only be treated as a base to build on. This said, the variety of tones which can be produced easily is remarkable. Mixed with white and yellow ochre, the following colours all give flesh tints:

Venetian red, umber, and ultramarine
Venetian red, umber, and black
Burnt sienna, umber, and ultramarine
Indian red, umber, and ultramarine
Umber and ultramarine
Vermillion and burnt umber
Rose madder, vermillion, and umber
Venetian red, umber, and Prussian blue

These suggestions just scratch the surface of possible mixes.

(Flesh colors that are commercially available are fine to build on, as noted, but there are many colors that can substitute without mixing. FLOQUIL has four flesh colors: Dresden, a very light flesh; China, a yellowish Oriental flesh; Congo, a dark brown Negroid flesh; and Samoa, a Southern Pacific light brown flesh.

Other colors that are great for starting with are TESTOR's flat wood tan and HUMBROL's leather or hardened leather. These colors eliminate the mixing, or can be mixed with other shades to give some truly exotic flesh colors. Just one final note — FLOQUIL mixes only with FLOQUIL, TESTOR'S only with TESTOR'S , and, of course, HUMBROL only with HUMBROL. They cannot be intermixed. — Ed.)

There are a couple of points which must be made now. Guard against making skin tones too pale; after all, your average character is supposed to spend a great deal of time in harsh conditions. Remember that this list of mixes only

covers the standard human skin colours, the normal black/brown/yellow/off-pink varieties. When you add the skin colours which appear in fantasy novels — green, blue, purple, etc. — the range is virtually limitless.

The first stage in painting any face is to make up a natural flesh colour (or unnatural flesh, if you feel that way inclined) by using whatever mix you are happy with. Apply this colour over the entire area of the face and neck. Don't do the hands just yet, as I will come back to them and largely naked figures in a moment. Add a touch of crimson, yellow ochre and burnt umber (optionally some ultramarine as well, although this will make the face look older) to some of the base colour. Shade in the eye sockets, the depression under the lower lip, under the chin, and round the hair line.

Now, most important of all, turn to the eyes. First paint in the whites (even if the "whites" aren't white) and then the iris and make sure that no white shows under the iris — the "Heavenward gaze." It's also a fact that very little white shows in the eyes, and it is important that you do not end up with a wide-eyed stare. When you have done the iris, add a darker line round the eyes and blend the lower lids to the bottom of the eyes. At this point you can add some colour to the upper lid to produce an impression of makeup on female figures. If you have problems getting the iris centred, try to make the eyes look to one side or the other — preferably the same side for both eyes. If you are particularly masochistic you can try adding a pupil and putting a tiny highlight of white in the iris.

Right, now the eyes are done; back to the rest of the face. Add a touch of white to some of the basic flesh and highlight the ridge of the nose, the cheek bones under the eyes, the chin, the sides of the nostrils, and the centre patch of the forehead. Add a little touch of red to the flesh colour and touch in the cheeks and the lips, with perhaps a slightly darker tone between the lips. Now blend all these tones together — carefully — with an almost-dry brush so that there is a smooth progression between the highest and lowest shades.

Hair colour deserves a mention at this point as an integral part of the face. Try to avoid black on something as small as a 25mm figure, as it looks far too brutal. When you decide on a hair colour, make up a mixture which is one shade darker than what is wanted, and paint the hair with this shade. Now gently dry-brush the hair with white or a lighter shade, whichever looks most appropriate. The light colour takes on the high points and produces a realistic and pleasing effect with little effort.

Hands on most figures, and flesh generally on naked figures, require a slightly modified treatment. Before giving a base coat of flesh to hands, etc., apply a wash of umber, and then (on hands) leave the umber showing between the fingers. This wash of umber has the effect of darkening the skin tone, giving a hard, weatherbeaten appearance. When painting a barbarian, for instance, shade the musculature with more brown than red to emphasise this weatherbeaten look, and highlight with a flesh mixture plus white and yellow ochre. Tone this effect down on females by being less emphatic in your shading.

That's it for now; next time we'll continue with painting the rest of the figure. And even MORE to come after that!

CODEBOOK

NO, we're not publishing a Codebook. That's just the name of this column.

These are encoded phrases for you to decode for your own pleasure. They all have something to do with one of TSR's role playing games, though, and I'll give a hint for each one.

There are a few standard techniques for breaking substitution codes (we won't get into more elaborate types until later). The first thing the codebreaker needs is a list of the most frequently used letters of the alphabet, and they are (in order): ETAOINSHRDLU. If you count the frequency of characters in the coded message, and compare them to this list, you can often arrive at a nearly correct translation of some words.

Next, look at small words. The only one-letter words are A and I (though single letters pop up now and then in special contexts, like "X ray"). There are many two-letter words, but AM, AN, AS, AT, IF, IN, IS, IT, OF, ON, OR, UP, and US are some of the more common ones.

More on this later; now for some cryptic messages.

1. An egg is for you, soon:

DPCIJGYDT, EGMV'P YQX BCAZSQ, TGP YQX AQBCYP GYA PHQSSP DC JCYDMCS DTQB. LQXGMQ OZWJN GJDWCYP; VCZ BGV LQ FQKQA LV HQMWSP, CM UGRQA LV WYJMQAWLSQ AGYEQMP, LZD HMQPP CY, ZPWYE VCZM XWPACB GYA WYDQSSWEQYJQ DC EZWAQ VCZ DC PZJJQPP. GYA ECCA SZJN — DQSS ZP DTWP JCAQ GYA XWY G HMWRQ.

2. Like ABC but quieter:

EAPUP ZUP EGM KJNQZIPNEZW LEUJREJUPL GAYRA LPUHP ZL EAP XZLYL KMU ZWW NPEGMUV QPLYSNL. EAPLP LEUJREJUPL ZUP UPKPUUPQ EM ZL LEZEYR ZNQ IMXYWP. RAZUZREPUL YN EAP LEZEYR LCLEPI ZUP ZLLYSNPQ EM LPE WMRZEYMNL KUMI GAYRA EAPC UPOPZEPQWC RMIIJNYRZEP GYEA EAP LZIP RMNEZREL, GAYWP IMXYWP RAZUZREPUL RZN RAZNSP EAP WMRZEYMNL, RMNEZREL, ZNQ PHPN EAP IPEAMQL JLPQ.

3. A Mexican place old, new, and empty:

OJBI LEC NXLJBAQGLNBX LB LEC DV INXNIBAQSC: "XBV, IBJC LERX 200 YCRJK [ROLCJ LEC ACKLJQGLNBX], LEC JRANBRGLNTNLY NK DBXC RXA BXSY R PRJJCX ACKCJL JCIRNXK. LEC CTCJ-KENOLNXD KRXAK GBTCJ LEC KLRJFBJL NX R LENGM KEJBQA IRXY ICLCJK ACCF. BXSY LEC LBF BO LEC LRSS JRARJ LBVCJ JCIRNXK RPBTC LEC KQJORGC BO LEC PQJXNXD ACKCJL NX LEC YCRJ LVCXLY-OBQJ KCTCXLY-BXC." — FRQS JCNGEC

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MORE CONVENTIONS

Here's some more information on upcoming conventions, as we promised. They either give more information about an event previously listed (in which case they say "UPDATE") or details on a con we just heard about. As always, if you hear of a convention we haven't mentioned, let us know; we'll tell everyone else.

**** EASTERN USA ****

SF CON V (June 18-20, Syracuse, NY): SF con with wargames, formerly "Conebulus." Write 337 Hartford Road, Syracuse, NY 13028

KOMMAND CON (July 24-25, Mansfield, OH): From the Kommander's Wargaming Club, this one's at the Ohio Army National Guard Armory. Write KWC at POB 2235, Mansfield, OH 44905.

CONSTELLATION (Sep. 1-5, Baltimore, MD): SF con at the Baltimore Convention Center. Guests John Brunner, Dave Kyle, Jack Chalker. $20 until June, then up. Write POB 1046, Baltimore, MD 21203.

WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION '82 (Oct. 29-31, New Haven, CT): This one's for fans of Fantasy literature, held at the Park Plaza Hotel. Guests include authors Peter Straub, Joseph Payne Brennan, Charles L. Grant. Limited to 750 attendees; $25. Write POB 8262, East Hartford, CT 06198

**** CENTRAL USA ****

MICHICON (June 11-13, Detroit, MI): Write POB 787, Troy, MI 48099

HOUSTONCON '82 (June 18-20, Houston, TX): SF, Fantasy, and "nostalgia" from the L-5 Society. Write POB 713, Stafford, TX 77477

AMBERCON IV (June 25-27, Wichita, KS): SF con at the Wichita Royale, with guests Roger Zelazny and Howard Waldrop. Write POB 947, Wichita, KS 67201.

OKON (July 16-18, Tulsa, OK): Science Fiction and Fantasy plus wargaming. Contact POB 4229, Tulsa, OK 74104

ARCHON 6 (July 23-25, St. Louis, MO): SF/Fantasy con at the Chase Park Plaza, with guests Stephen King, Robert Bloch, and Walt Liebscher. $16. Write POB 15852. Overland. MO 63114.

TEXCON '82 (Aug. 6-8, Austin, TX): Role playing, boardgames, wargames. Send a SASE to 8028 Gessner Rd. #1805, Austin, TX 78573

CHICON IV (September 2-6, Chicago, IL) UPDATE: Guests Bertram Chandler, Kelly Freas, Lee Hoffman. $50. Write POB A3120, Chicago, IL 60690.

BABEL CONFERENCE (September 24-26, Wyoming, MI): Wargaming and other events. Contact Dave Marshal, 1160 36th St. SW, Wyoming, MI 49509

**** WESTERN USA ****

SHADOWCON (July 2-4, Los Angeles, CA): SF con at the Hyatt Hotel, with guests Robert Bloch and Roger Dicken. Send 2 SASEs and $20 ($25 at the door) to 8601 A W. Cermak Rd., N. Riverside, IL 60546.

WESTERCON 35 (July 2-5, Phoenix, AZ): SF con at the Phoenix Hilton, with guests Gordon Dickson and Fran Skene. Over $20. Write POB 11644, Phoenix, AZ 85064.

**** CANADA ****

STRATACON III (No date given; Vancouver, B.C., Canada): The Western Canada Wargamers Convention will be at the Century Plaza Travelodge, 1015 Burrard St., Vancouver, British Columbia. Unofficial but expanded D&D tournament, miniatures, boardgames. Write Allan Witherspoon, Dept. H, 326 Greensboro Place, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V5X 4M3.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

We've been hearing from *lots* of TS clubs lately; it's really great. The game seems to really be taking off in the gaming world, so much so that it may eventually rival the D&D game in popularity!

Remember that the TOP SECRET® Gadget Contest had the wrong date printed at first; it's running until the GEN CON game convention in August. The winner in each category (Communications, Surveillance, Assassination, Vehicular, and Misc.) will receive a $10 credit towards any RPGA Gift Catalog or Membership purchase, and The POLYHEDRON will print all the details. Does the name Corey Koebernick ring a bell? It should; he's the author of the TS minimodule "Executive One," and co-author of both TS-001 and TS-002 modules, with Mike Carr. Both of them work for TSR, and both are quite busy, but Corey has agreed to write a few articles about TOP SECRET campaign design and planning for the POLYHEDRON! Watch for lots of really fine TOP SECRET articles in the near future.

The RPGA Network is about to start running Official TOP SECRET tournaments at the GEN CON conventions. If you would like to be an Administrator for an Official RPGA TS event, please write for an Admin Questionnaire. It's free if you enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope; send it to "RPGA Administrators, POB 509, Lake Geneva, WI 53147". We're expecting a large response to this, so if you'd like to earn a free 1-year membership extension for running an Official session, get your application in early! Preference will be given to those Admins who have the most experience with the TS game system.

BOOT HILL™

Wild West Game

There's nothing new here, as far as we know. *Write to us,* BOOT HILL™ fans! We might be able to talk Corey (see TOP SECRET News) into writing something, but we'd sure like to hear from the Membership.

GAMMA WORLD™

Science Fiction Game

The POLYHEDRON Staff is proud to announce that the infamous James M. Ward, co-author of the GAMMA WORLD™ game, METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA rules, DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ book, and currently of TSR's Educational Products Division, will be writing many articles on various games in upcoming issues. Jim is a good friend of the RPGA Network, and has graciously consented to share his ideas with us all on a regular basis. And we're already expecting him at the Members' Meetings at the GEN CON® East and GEN CON game conventions; write down all your questions for him, so you don't forget to ask!

The GAMMA WORLD Art Contest is getting some nice responses, but we'd like to see things from more of you! The winners, one per creature, will get free autographed copies of the revised GAMMA WORLD game, and the art submitted *could* be used in the product itself! More on the GAMMA WORLD game next issue.

NORANDIR

AFTER AN AFTERNOON'S WALK, GODSWIND AND NORANDIR COME TO THE POINT WHERE THE FALLING STAR MET WITH THE SURFACE OF THIS WORLD... NOR.

'TIS NOTHING BUT IRON, GODSWIND...

MY BLADE SHEARS THROUGH IT AS THOUGH IT WERE A MERE ORC.

CONSIDERING YOUR EXPERTISE FOR SLAYING THOSE FOUL CREATURES...

IT MAY YET BE OF USE.

JEST IF YOU WISH, BUT NO SWORD OF WORTH SHALL BE FORGED FROM THIS ORE.

LET US BE ON OUR WAY, THEN; THE WINDLORD TOYS WITH OUR CURIOSITY. STILL... I WONDER.

WHAT MANNER OF DEMON DARES TO CAST THE HIGH ONE'S LIGHTS FROM THE HEAVENS? WHO QUENCHES THEIR FLAMES?

SO ACROSS THE EASTERN WILDERLAND THEY PASS, FINALLY COMING TO TALATH - A WEALTHY CITY SET AMONG THE BUSY DWARVEN TRADE ROUTES. THERE THEY FIND THE SHELTER OF A LOCAL INN, AND THERE THEY STAY AWHILE, RECOVERING FROM THE LONG MONTHS IN THE WILD,.. AND PREPARING.

GODSWIND AND NORANDIR SPEND ONE LAST NIGHT IN THE COMFORT OF THE "OL' WYRM" INN. AMIDST THE MUSIC AND MERRIMENT, GODSWIND IS DISTURBED BY A FEARFUL MESSAGE FROM AFAR.

HAVE ONE TOO MANY ALES, WIZARD?

SOMETHING FAR MORE SERIOUS, I'M AFRAID. TOMORROW WE MUST HEAD EAST.

CONTINUED...